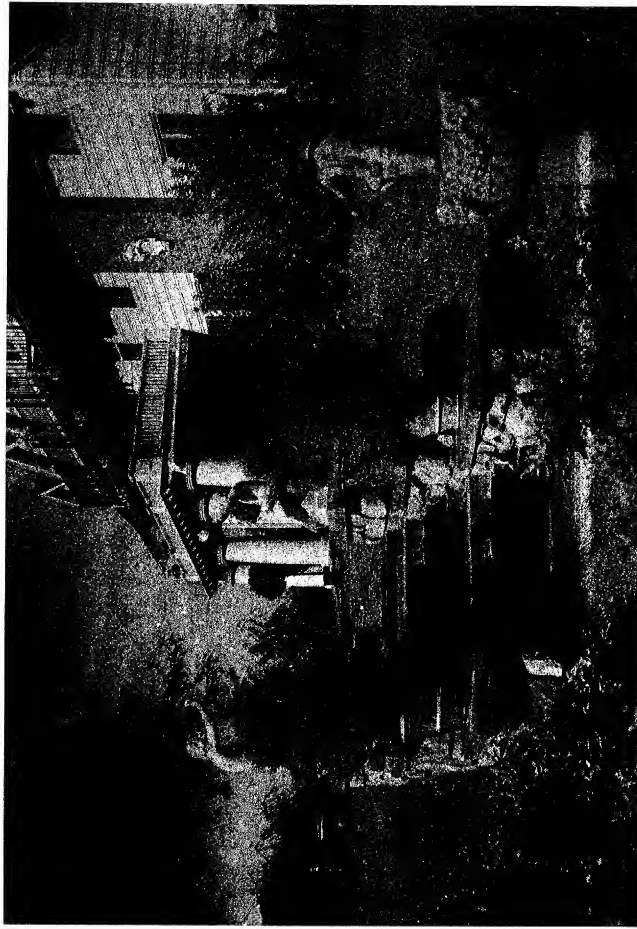


"I feel myself very strongly the particular value — a value which, rightly or wrongly, I cannot help feeling inestimable — in a modern play of reflecting absolutely and truthfully the life and environment about us; every class, every kind, every emotion, every motive, every occupation, every business, every idleness! Never was life so varied, so complex; what a choice, then! Take what strikes you most, in the hope it will interest others. Take what suits you most to do — what perhaps you can do best — and then do it better. Be truthful, and then nothing can be too big, nothing should be too small, so long as it is here, and *there!* Apart from the question of literature, apart from the question of art, reflect the real thing, with true observation and with sincere feeling for what it is and what it represents, and that is art and literature in a modern play. If you inculcate an idea in your play, so much the better for your play and for you — and for your audience. In fact, there is small hope for your play *as* a play, if you haven't some small idea in it somewhere and somehow, even if it is hidden — it is sometimes better for you if it is hidden, but it must of course be integral. Some ideas are mechanical. Then they are no good. These are the ideas for which the author does all the



Memorial Edition

PLAYS BY CLYDE FITCH

IN FOUR VOLUMES

VOLUME TWO

BARBARA FRIETCHIE
CAPTAIN JINKS OF THE HORSE MARINES
THE CLIMBERS

EDITED BY MONTROSE J. MOSES
AND VIRGINIA GERSON



BOSTON
LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY
1920

817 -
F54-P
V. 7

Copyright, 1915,
BY LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY.

PREFATORY NOTE

IN "Barbara Frietchie" and "Captain Jinks of the Horse Marines", Mr. Fitch continued the picturesque historical vein, so successfully begun in "Beau Brummell", "Frédéric Lemaître", "His Grace de Grammont" and "Nathan Hale." His love of a period was not an artificial taste with him; he had the inestimable ability of absorbing atmosphere, and of giving to his detail little intimate touches which resulted in realism amidst romantic action. And even though there is such wide contrast between the first two plays in this volume and "The Climbers", one can easily detect in "Captain Jinks", for example, characteristic flashes foreshadowing the satirist of the later social plays.

It is not so easy a matter to re-create a period convincingly, however picturesque the details and however romantic the plot. Mr. Fitch's inventions were always entertaining. But it was because of his ability to make himself a part of the time, place, and manner, that his

scenes breathed a reality which gave them life. "Barbara Frietchie" has an intimate touch of the South during the Civil War, without being flamboyantly colored. "Captain Jinks" — as excellent in technique as Sir Arthur Wing Pinero's "Trelawny of the 'Wells' ", and excelling Mr. Edward Sheldon's later attempt, in "Romance", to embody the old-time flavor of New York city, — revealed, without effort or pose, that intimacy and contemporaneousness which are to be found in some old Journal, written by an eye-witness. In such achievements as these "costume" plays, Mr. Fitch showed exceptional ability, and won popular distinction.

"Barbara Frietchie" deals delicately with the love romance of Mr. Fitch's mother and father. In plot it is simple, and it is theatrically effective, as well as theatrically reflective of all the excitement of war, without the panoply of war. As soon as it was announced that Miss Julia Marlowe would appear in the historical rôle, the papers began to speculate as to how the dramatist would handle the subject. "They've begun already to scold me about lying," Fitch wrote to some friend. Naturally, it would have been impossible for him to gain much romantic interest by keeping his heroine an old woman, to accord with historical tradition. A concession had to be

granted him at the very outset. But there are always exact critics who can allow a dramatist no latitude; and even before "Barbara Frietchie" was produced, Mr. Fitch found himself opposed by the Press. This necessitated his printing on his program a disclaimer as to the historical exactness of his situation, and declaring his sole ambition to picture the spirit and atmosphere of a particular period, through a delicate, imaginary story. Both the playwright and the actress were amply rewarded. Some of Mr. Fitch's severest critics could not but recognize in "Barbara Frietchie" much ingenuity and much cumulative effect. In the preparations for the production of this play he exhibited the same particularity, as regards costuming and stage setting, that marked his "Nathan Hale."

It was generally the case with Clyde Fitch that he based the story of his play on some definite incident or situation brought to his notice or coming under his direct observation. From a mere suggestion he would often gradually evolve his plot. But "Captain Jinks" was inspired purely by his love for an historical period. And we believe that its source of being lay entirely in the fact that he had often declared his interest in the manners and customs of 1872. The real seeds for this play, in which Miss Ethel Barry-

more gained her first distinction as a "star", are to be found in the popular songs, "Shoo fly! Don't bother me", and "I'm Captain Jinks of the Horse Marines."

"The Climbers" marks a definite departure on the part of the playwright, both in technique and in approach. When Professor Brander Matthews was asked to open the Fitch Memorial Lectureship on the Drama, established at Amherst College by the dramatist's mother — during one of the discourses, he said in substance: The historical is not the highest form of drama. An author knows best the contemporary life immediately about him, and can deal with it easily. But for historical setting, he must reach the ideals through research and reading, and often his estimates are not accurate, and often they are devoid of spontaneity. The drama, based on contemporary life, in time takes on an historical value. In this way, Clyde Fitch's "The Climbers" will be a definite document to the social historians of the next century. It has the same grasp of existing conditions that is manifested in Howells's "The Rise of Silas Lapham" and in Mark Twain's "Life on the Mississippi."

In other words, Mr. Fitch's most distinctive and his most mature vein began to assert itself in this play — his vein of the commonplace raised

to a height of refreshing satire, which was brilliant and unusual. In fact, the very unusualness of the opening scene resulted in "The Climbers" being sent traveling from manager's office to manager's office before Miss Amanda Bingham accepted it, and assembled around her a brilliant company for its production.

This change in interest, which now marked the work of the playwright, began to find expression in his comments on the theatre. "The plays that have lasted," Mr. Fitch once wrote, "are valuable to us as literature and as documents. Technique never has kept a play alive through the centuries. Technique alone is machinery, and we improve all machinery year by year. Outside of their literature, many of Shakespeare's plays are documents of hourly life and manners in the days of Elizabeth, and if you are interested in knowing what life was in town and country before and during the Restoration, read Wycherley, Congreve, Beaumont and Fletcher. You will find there the small human document you won't get out of history, *per se*. So Sheridan reproduces the social Georgian era, Oscar Wilde the late Victorian, and in France, Lavagan, Hervieu, and Capus are giving the Paris and France of the twentieth century for future generations to reproduce for themselves, if they wish.
